

CalWORKs FACT SHEET

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program is California's version of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which reformed welfare. CalWORKs provides temporary cash assistance to meet family basic needs. It also provides education, employment and training programs to assist the family's move toward self-sufficiency. Components of CalWORKs include: time limits on eligibility, work requirements, supportive services (to encourage program participation) and parental responsibility.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet income and property tests and children must be deprived of parental support and care due to the incapacity, death, absence, or unemployment of one or more parents. Also, persons convicted of a felony related to the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance and persons fleeing to avoid prosecution, custody, or confinement after conviction of a felony, are not eligible for CalWORKs.

TIME LIMITS

State law provides for a cumulative 60-month lifetime limit on cash aid for adults. Within the 60-month timeframe, recipients are eligible to receive assistance for a cumulative total of 18- or 24-months, depending on when they began receiving aid. For a recipient to continue receiving aid after reaching the 18- and 24-month time limit, the county must certify that no unsubsidized job with sufficient hours to meet the CalWORKs work requirement is available for the recipient, and the recipient must fulfill the work requirement by participating in community service and/or unsubsidized employment.

PARTICIPATION RATES

State work participation requirements are designed to assist in meeting federal work participation requirements in order to avoid fiscal penalties. Federal work participation requirements include:

50% of all families (both one- and two-parent) receiving cash aid, one parent must be working or in a countable work activity 30 hours per week.

In California, the "all families" category is comprised of one-parent AUs only. Our two-parent AU caseload is a State-only program. Otherwise, 90% of two-parent families receiving cash aid must be working, or in a work activity, for a combined total of 35 hours each week.

WORK REQUIREMENTS

Parents and caretaker adults, unless exempt from work requirements, are required to participate in Welfare to Work (WTW) activities as a condition of receiving aid. WTW activities include unsubsidized and subsidized employment, work experience, on-the-job training, grant-based on-the-job training, work-study, self-employment, community service, adult basic education, job skills training, vocational education, job search/job readiness assistance, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, domestic abuse services, and other activities necessary that assist recipients in obtaining unsubsidized employment.

An adult in a one-parent assistance unit (AU) is required to participate in WTW activities for an average of 32 hours per week, each month. In two-parent households, one or both adults must participate in WTW activities for a combined total of an average of 35 hours per week, each month, with one participating for at least 20 hours per week.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive services, including childcare, transportation, ancillary expenses and personal counseling are available for families participating in WTW activities. If supportive services are not available, the recipient has good cause for not participating.

Special supportive services and intensive case management services also available for pregnant and parenting teens under the age of 20. These services are provided through the Cal-Learn Program, which is designed to encourage pregnant and parenting teens to return to and/or stay in school. Bonuses or sanctions are applied to the grant four times a year depending on the teen's grades. An additional bonus is given to each teen upon earning a high school diploma or equivalent. Participation in Cal-Learn is mandatory for pregnant or parenting teens ages 18 and under and voluntary for specified 19 year olds.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

CalWORKs encourages parental responsibility by requiring parents to immunize their pre-school age children and enroll their school-age children in school. Failure to meet these requirements results in financial penalties.

BENEFIT LEVELS

Grant levels are set by the state and amounts vary according to family size and geographic location. Families in high cost-of-living areas (Region 1) receive slightly more money than families in other areas (Region 2). A family of three with no other income, living in Region 1 currently receives a monthly grant of \$679 while the same family living in Region 2 receives \$647.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The CalWORKs Program is administered by county welfare departments under supervision of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Although eligibility requirements and grant levels are uniform throughout the state, counties are given considerable latitude to design welfare-to-work programs that are based on the needs of their respective clientele, local economic conditions and available resources. Each county submitted, to CDSS, a CalWORKs county plan describing specific program outcomes and how those outcomes would be achieved. Counties earn financial performance incentives for the savings generated from diversion, larger number of recipients leaving aid for jobs, and reduced grants due to increased recipient earnings. Also, counties will share in any fiscal penalties levied on the state if they fail to meet federal work participation requirements.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

AB 1542 (Thompson, Chapter 270, Statutes of 1997), Welfare to Work Act of 1997, established the CalWORKs Program in California. AB 1542 eliminated the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program and replaced them with the CalWORKs program.